



AMERICAN
KENNEL CLUBSM

Monday, April 12, 2010

The Honorable Deval Patrick
Governor, Commonwealth of Massachusetts
State House
Office of the Governor
Room 280
Boston, MA 02133

RE: Oppose House Bill 344, Act Prohibiting Debarking of Dogs

Dear Governor Patrick:

On behalf of the thousands of responsible dog owners and breeders in Massachusetts, I respectfully write you with grave concerns about House Bill 344, which seeks to ban the surgical devocalization of dogs. The American Kennel Club (AKC) and the Massachusetts Federation of Responsible Dog Owners both oppose HB 344 and encourage you to return the bill to the General Court without your signature.

The American Kennel Club (AKC) was established in 1884 to promote the study, breeding, exhibiting, and advancement of purebred dogs. We represent over 4,600 dog clubs nationally, including 110 clubs in Massachusetts comprised of thousands of Massachusetts residents and taxpayers. Our mission includes promoting responsible dog ownership and working to protect the rights of all dog owners.

Much misinformation exists about debarking of dogs. When performed by a veterinarian, debarking is an acceptable medical procedure that is often done as a "last resort" when all other methods of modifying a dog's behavior have failed. **For many responsible owners, debarking is the only alternative to euthanizing or surrendering their canine companion to a local shelter when their pet's noisy behavior continually disturbs the community.** The decision to debark a dog is one that is best left to the owner and his veterinarian. The AKC is not alone in these beliefs—the American Veterinary Medical Association believes that debarking is a viable final alternative to euthanization (http://www.avma.org/issues/policy/animal_welfare/devocalization.asp) and the Massachusetts Veterinary Medical Association (<http://www.massvet.org/displaycommon.cfm?an=1&subarticlenbr=119>) opposes HB 344.

If enacted as currently written, HB 344 will most certainly result in the unnecessary deaths of innocent animals. The American Kennel Club believes that government should not decide what valid veterinary medical procedures can or cannot be done based on anecdotal evidence—as was done regarding HB 344—especially if that procedure may prevent the unnecessary execution of innocent animals. The American Kennel Club implores you to return House Bill 344 to the General Court without your signature. We encourage you to recommend that the General Court permit debarking in "last resort" circumstances.

Sincerely,

Sheila Goffe
Director, Government Relations

Cc: Senate President Theresa Murray
House Speaker Robert A. DeLeo

PMG